

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1 - 28 (cancelled)

Claim 29 (currently amended) A method of inhibiting erosion of an interior surface of a fixed bed process vessel by solid objects caused to move rapidly around ~~round and round~~ in an annular zone against the interior surface of the vessel by a fluid passing over the interior surface, where the annular zone is above the fixed bed and is in a plane angularly displaced relative to the direction of travel of the fluid, the method including providing at least one trapping formation at or in close proximity to the vessel interior surface to trap solid objects whirling in said annular zone, thereby to inhibit erosion of the interior surface of the vessel in said annular zone, said vessel including retaining means for retaining the bed in position, said at least one trapping formation being defined by the retaining means.

Claim 30 (cancelled)

Claim 31 (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 30, in which the retaining means defines a plurality of circumferentially spaced trapping formations and in which the fluid travels vertically and the trapping formations are provided in a horizontal plane.

Claim 32 (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 31, in which the objects are trapped in bays or pockets defined between pairs of trapping formations or between each trapping formation and the interior surface of the vessel, ~~as the case may be.~~

Claim 33 (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 30, in which the retaining means is in the form of a generally horizontally extending tile or brick layer configured to allow gas to pass therethrough, and in which each trapping formation is defined by a tile or brick of increased depth or thickness compared to other tiles or bricks in the layer of tiles or bricks and projecting above the upper surface of the tile or brick layer.

Claim 34 (new) A method as claimed in claim 29, wherein said retaining means covers substantially an entire area between said annular zone and the fixed bed.